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SUBJECT: SWEDISH RESPONSE AND EU DECLARATION ON AUNG SAN
SUU KYI'S CONVICTION

REF: STATE 83598

11. (U) Summary: The news of Aung San Suu Kyi's (ASSK) conviction prompted strong reactions, both from Swedish officials and from the Swedish EU Presidency. All sources condemned the verdict and weighed in on the possible effects of sanctions on Burma and against those responsible for the verdict. FM Carl Bildt also hinted at possible international demands for an arms embargo against Burma from the UN Security Council. End Summary.

12. (U) On August 11, PM Fredrik Reinfeldt gave an early morning Swedish television interview in which he condemned the verdict against ASSK, saying this was the regime's way of getting rid of the most important political opponent before the election next year. Reinfeldt noted that the EU has applied sanctions against Burma since 1996, but he indicated the EU sanctions alone will not make a significant impact. French leadership on this matter is critical, according to Reinfeldt, because France trades the most with Burma. To make an impact, all countries must rally around the measures, said Reinfeldt, adding that China remains "a problem" because China views ASSK's conviction as a "domestic issue."

13. (U) FM Bildt wrote on his August 11 blog that the Burmese regime "obviously hesitated before announcing the sentence," perhaps as a result of the strengthening international coalition on this issue. Bildt reiterated that the EU had already prepared a decision "aimed at the persons responsible for this verdict and other measures against the regime's financial interests." Regarding an international arms embargo against Burma, Bildt wrote, "It would, of course, be great if it would be possible to gather the UN Security Council for a decision of that nature." It goes without saying, he added, that the EU would support such a decision. Bildt concluded that ASSK's conviction means that Sweden and the EU should continue to "give Burma high priority."

14. (U) In a statement appearing on the Swedish EU Presidency website on August 11, the EU condemned the verdict against ASSK and other political prisoners in Burma/Myanmar. The declaration emphasized that ASSK had been wrongly arrested and urged "authorities to immediately and unconditionally release her." Noting that there have been numerous high-level protests over ASSK's arrest, including from the UN Secretary-General and several ASEAN Member States, the declaration stated that the EU will respond with "targeted measures against those responsible for the verdict." The declaration continued, "the EU will further reinforce its restrictive measures targeting the regime of Burma/Myanmar, including its economic interests." Echoing reftel points, the EU recognized prisoner release as an "essential first step in the process of reconciliation" ahead of the 2010 elections." The full text of the declaration is available on Swedish EU Presidency website at www.se2009.eu.

15. (U) In response to reftel demarche points, Carl-Magnus Nilsson, MFA Burma Desk Officer, told Poloff on August 13 that the EU had already drafted a statement early this spring to release upon a negative verdict. After a "long and thorough discussion," the statement was agreed on at the July GAERC and released August 11. Nilsson also pointed to the European Council's adoption of a new set of targeted measures (2009/351/CFSP), released publicly on August 13, against Burma/Myanmar outlining a travel ban and an asset freeze for members of the judiciary responsible for the verdict and for entities owned and controlled by members of the regime.

16. (U) Post will continue to monitor Sweden's policy towards Burma and it's efforts within the EU on sanctioning Burma.
SILVERMAN